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Comment:



Chile's Break With Cuba Big OAS Victory

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Chile's break of relations with Communist Cuba is a signal victory for the Organization of American States and for the anti-communist forces in Chile.

It amply repays those U. S. police-makers, sparked by President Johnson's firm approach to foreign policy, who refused to weaken the formula pressed for by the anti-totalitarian members of the OAS at the recent meeting here in Washington on Cuban sanctions. The victory should bury forever the shibboleth that "unanimity" is an over-riding necessity in OAS decisions.

The reasons for the Chilean action are many. Perhaps most basic is the new feeling that the tide of extreme leftism is no longer the irresistible force in Latin America.

News from Chile discloses the backers of Sen. Eduardo Frei, the anti-communist liberal candidate for president in the Sept. 4 elections, are beginning to believe their man will win over the communist-socialist candidate, Sen. Salvador Allende.

Several public opinion polls, even one in rural districts, now point to a victory for Sr. Frei. Whether the samplings are reliable or not is impossible to say, but they are giving the anti-communist forces new heart.

Sr. Frei's backers are well organized and are working hard. They are finding comfort in Sr. Frei's popularity among women, who have a very large vote and who oppose atheistic communism.

Among other factors that

have stiffened the Alessandri government to break with Castro is the Chilean Army's determination not to see their country go down the drain like Cuba. To break with Castro, Sr. Alessandri threw down the gauntlet to an international trouble-making apparatus that time and again has shaken Latin American governments. He had to be very sure of his military and police backing to do it.

Sr. Alessandri also reportedly believed it was better to have the upsets, if any, over the break in relations to come before the Sept. 4 elections. He figured that extremist riots or strikes would favor, not injure, the chances that Chile's anti-communist ticket will win on Sept. 4.

Another factor counting in the balance is Chile's traditional 'legalism'. Chile's position in opposing the OAS call for a mandatory break was legalistic. But now that the mandate has been voted, Chileans are 'obeying the law.'

They have more than one reason for doing so. One is a border dispute with Bolivia that has flared up distressingly in the past two years. Another is a long-time border quarrel with Argentina. At any time, Chile may have to appeal to the OAS in these disputes.

Chile's action will undoubtedly influence Bolivia to follow suit. Uruguay, we hear, will also once the creaky machinery of their executive branch, run by nine 'presidents', can get moving.

This will leave Mexico, the fourth holdout, in an interesting position. The great isolationist country will, at last be isolated.